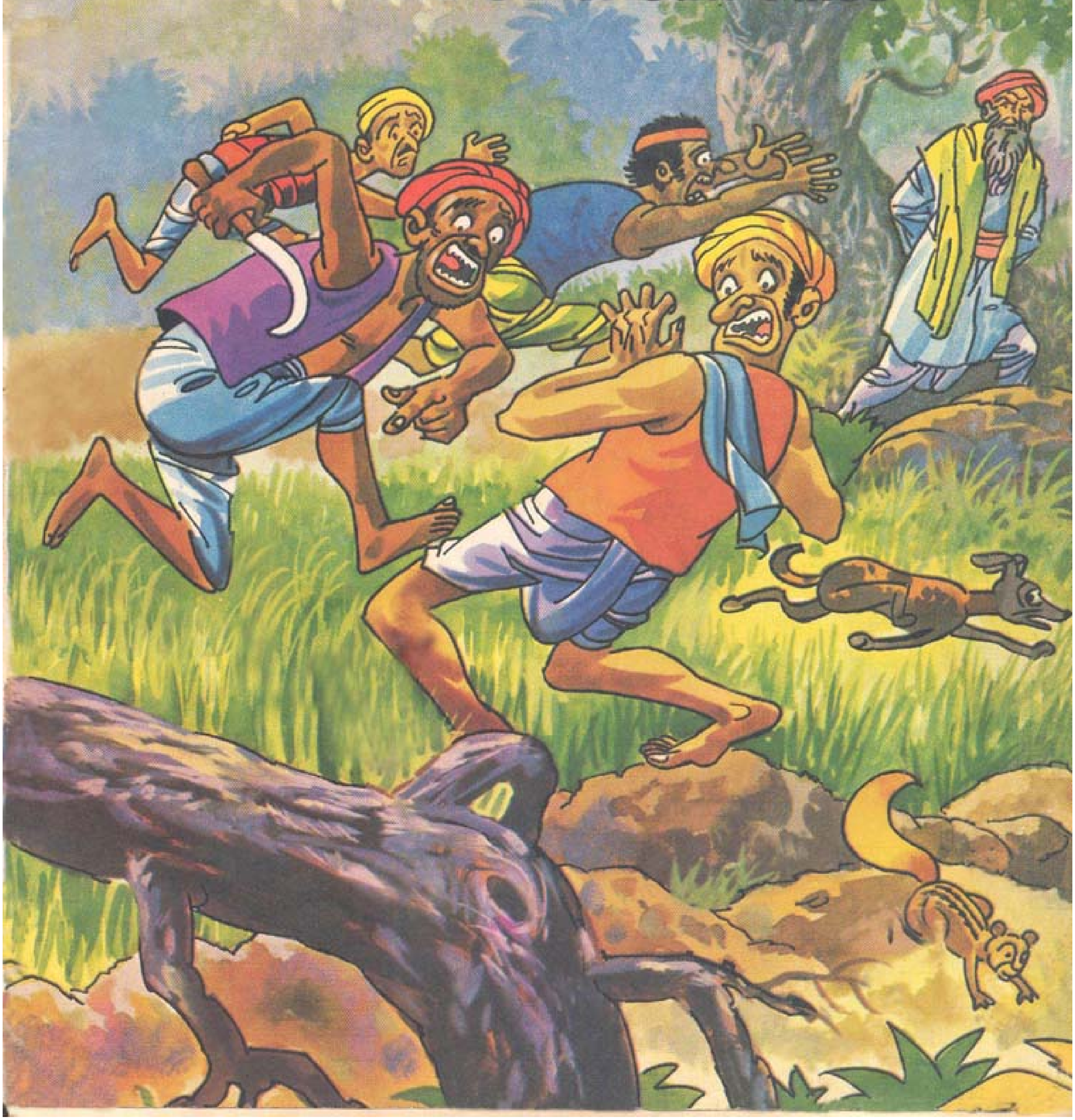
AMAR CHITRA KATHA

No. 321

THE GREEN DEMON

and Other Sufi Tales



Amar Chitra Katha
No. 321, November 1, 1984

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Published by:
H. G. MIRCHANDANI
for IBH Publishers Pvt. Ltd.,
Mahalaxmi Chambers,
22, Bhulabhai Desai Road,
Bombay 400 026 and printed by him
at IBH Printers, Marol Naka,
Mathuradas Vissanji Road,
Andheri (East), Bombay 400 059.

Distributors in U. S. A.
Admans Enterprises Inc.
1123 Broadway Suite 1010
New York N.Y. 10010
Subscription: (in India only)
Rs. 48/- for 12 issues and Rs. 96/-
for 24 issues. (Add Rs. 5/-
for outstation cheques).
Sole Authorised Agency for
Subscriptions: Partha Books Division,
Nav Prabhat Chambers,
Ranade Road, Dadar,
Bombay 400 028.

THE GREEN DEMON and Other Sufi Tales

While the word *Sufi* gained currency only in recent centuries, these seekers of TRUTH have been in existence for a much longer period.

A wise teacher is one whose goal is to teach a student *how* to learn and not merely *what* to learn. He helps the student to discover and fulfil his own potential. And this is what the true Sufi Master aspires to do — to help the seeker discover and fulfil his potential for supreme consciousness.

The seeker must see mankind which includes himself and the human predicament as they really are. This is the first step towards his goal. And one of the many tools the Sufi master uses to create and increase awareness in the seeker is the illustrative tale. While many of the tales that have come down to us might appear cryptic, sometimes even nonsensical, their import is clear to those in whom a certain degree of awareness has already been attained. The stories adapted in this Chitra Katha for our young readers, however, are quite explicit in their import.

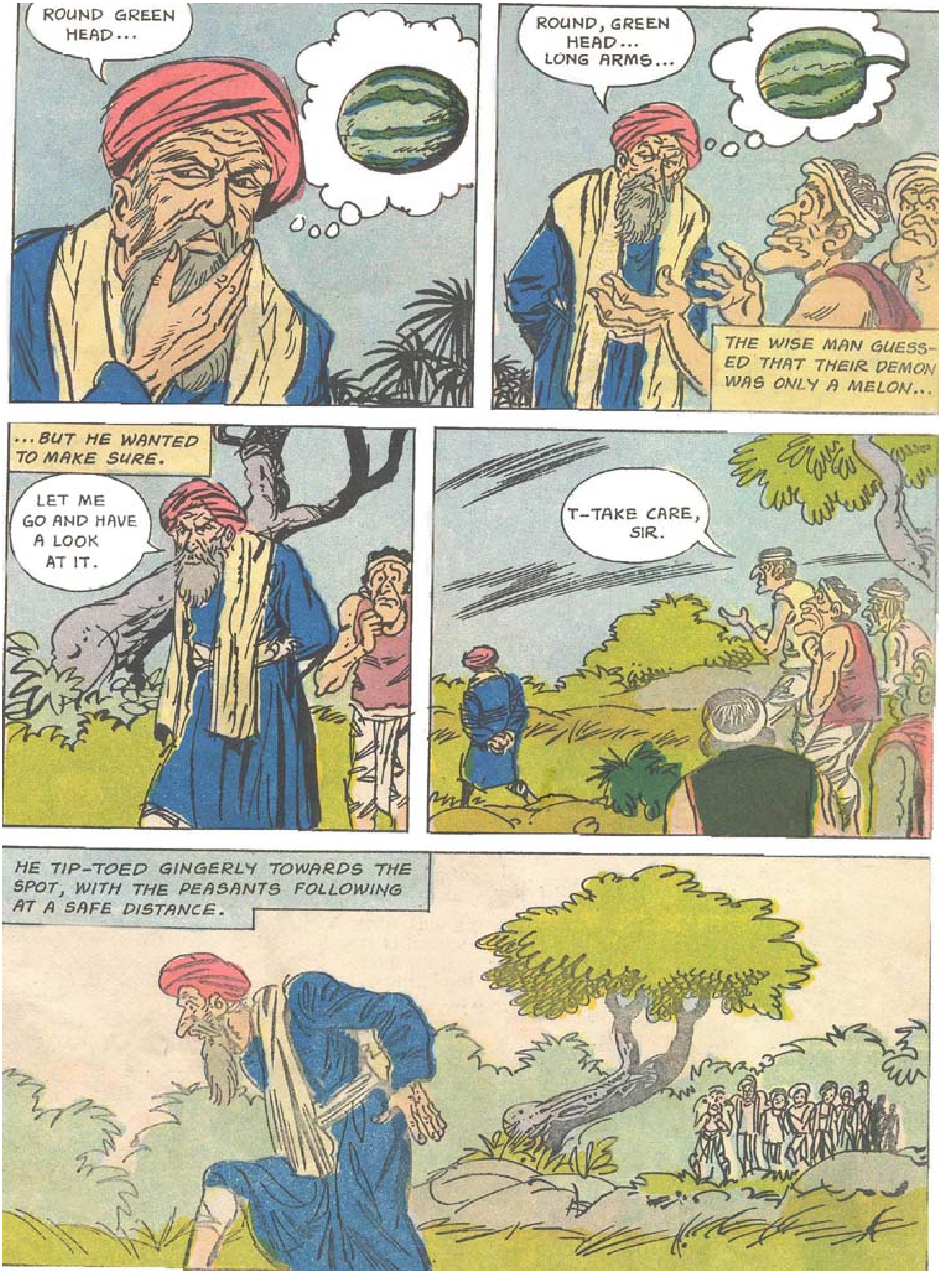
It is interesting to know that the development of Sufi thought and practices have been influenced, directly and indirectly, by both Upanishadic and Buddhist philosophy.


THE GREEN DEMON
A YOUNG MAN WANDERED INTO A FIELD WHERE A GROUP OF MEN WERE HARVESTING WHEAT.
!!
SUDDENLY THE MEN STOPPED WORKING . . .
. . . AND FLED FROM THE FIELD.
RUN, SIR! THERE IS A DEMON IN THE FIELD.
WHERE?
RIGHT THERE IN THE MIDDLE OF THE FIELD!


THE MAN RAN TO THE SPOT.
WHY, IT'S ONLY A WATER-MELON!
HE PULLED OUT A KNIFE FROM HIS WAISTBAND.
DON'T BE AFRAID. I'LL KILL YOUR DEMON FOR YOU.
HE CUT THE MELON OFF ITS STALK AND HELD IT IN ONE HAND.
THEN TO THE HORROR OF THE PEASANTS ...
...HE CUT OFF A SLICE...


...AND BITING INTO IT, WALKED TOWARDS THEM.
HE EATS DEMONS! HE'LL KILL AND EAT US NEXT.
WE WON'T GIVE HIM A CHANCE! LET'S DRIVE HIM AWAY. COME ON!
THE MEN WHO FEARED THE UNKNOWN FRUIT COULD BE QUITE DARING WHEN IT CAME TO ONE OF THEIR KIND.
?
THEY'RE MAD! STARK, STARING MAD!
AND HE FLED FROM THE SCENE.


WHEN THE NEXT HARVEST SEASON CAME ROUND, ANOTHER MELON WAS SPOTTED.
IT'S COME AGAIN! RUN! RUN FOR YOUR LIVES!
WHAT ARE YOU RUNNING AWAY FROM, MY FRIENDS?
A DEMON, SIR.
A DEMON? WHERE?
IT'S COMING OUT OF THE EARTH IN THE MIDDLE OF OUR FIELD, SIR.
CAN YOU DESCRIBE IT TO ME?
IT HAS A LARGE, ROUND, GREEN HEAD AND...
...AND LONG, LONG ARMS, SIR.


ROUND GREEN HEAD...
ROUND, GREEN HEAD... LONG ARMS...
THE WISE MAN GUESSED THAT THEIR DEMON WAS ONLY A MELON...
...BUT HE WANTED TO MAKE SURE.
LET ME GO AND HAVE A LOOK AT IT.
T-TAKE CARE, SIR.
HE TIP-TOED GINGERLY TOWARDS THE SPOT, WITH THE PEASANTS FOLLOWING AT A SAFE DISTANCE.

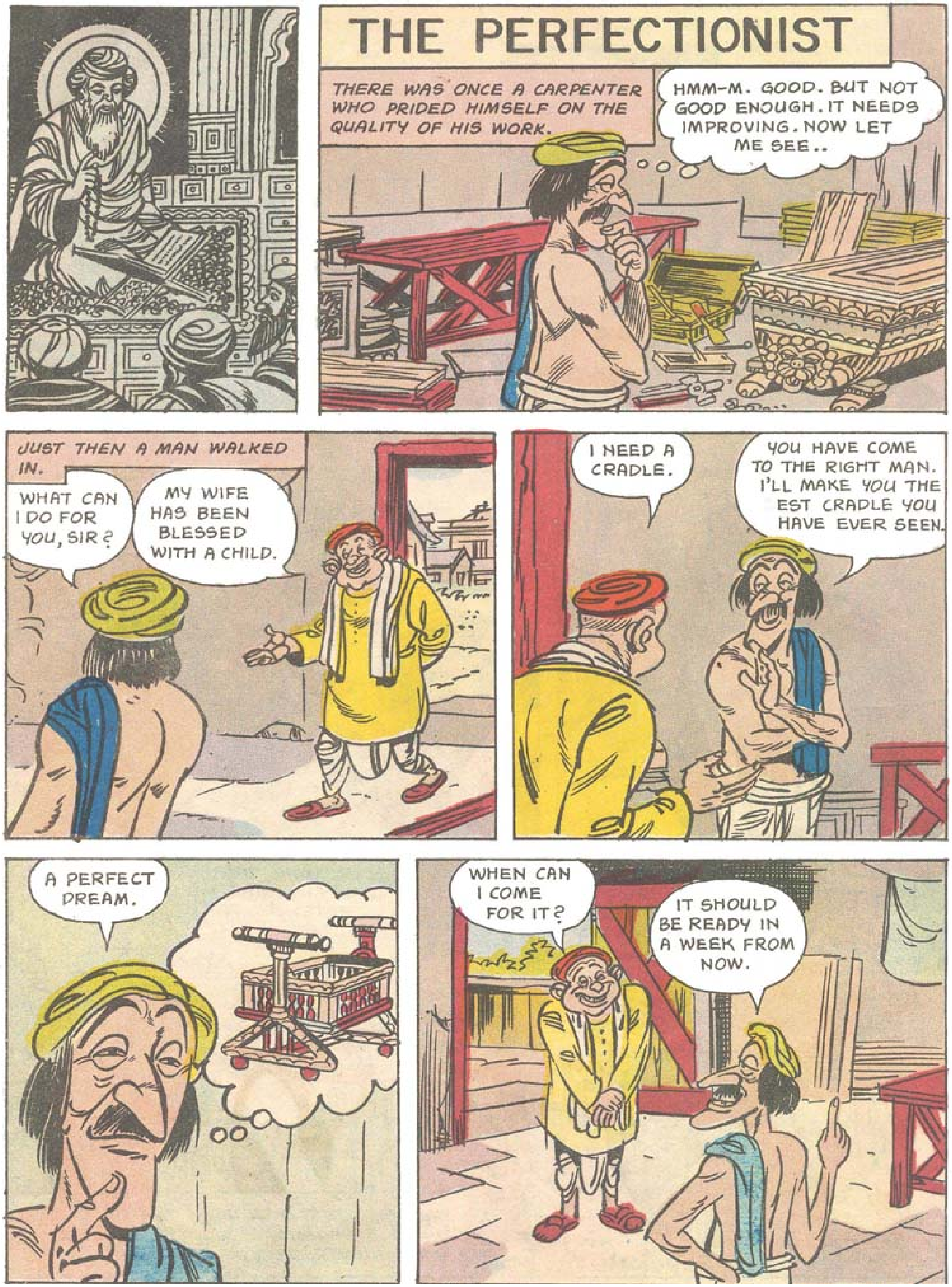

MY GUESS WAS RIGHT. BUT I WILL HAVE TO PRETEND THAT I AM TERRIFIED. THAT'S THE ONLY WAY TO WIN THEIR CONFIDENCE.
E-EE-AH!
YOU ARE RIGHT. IT COULD BE VERY DANGEROUS.
OH, GOD! WHAT SHALL WE DO NOW?
WE WILL HAVE TO WATCH IT FOR A FEW DAYS AND THEN DECIDE.



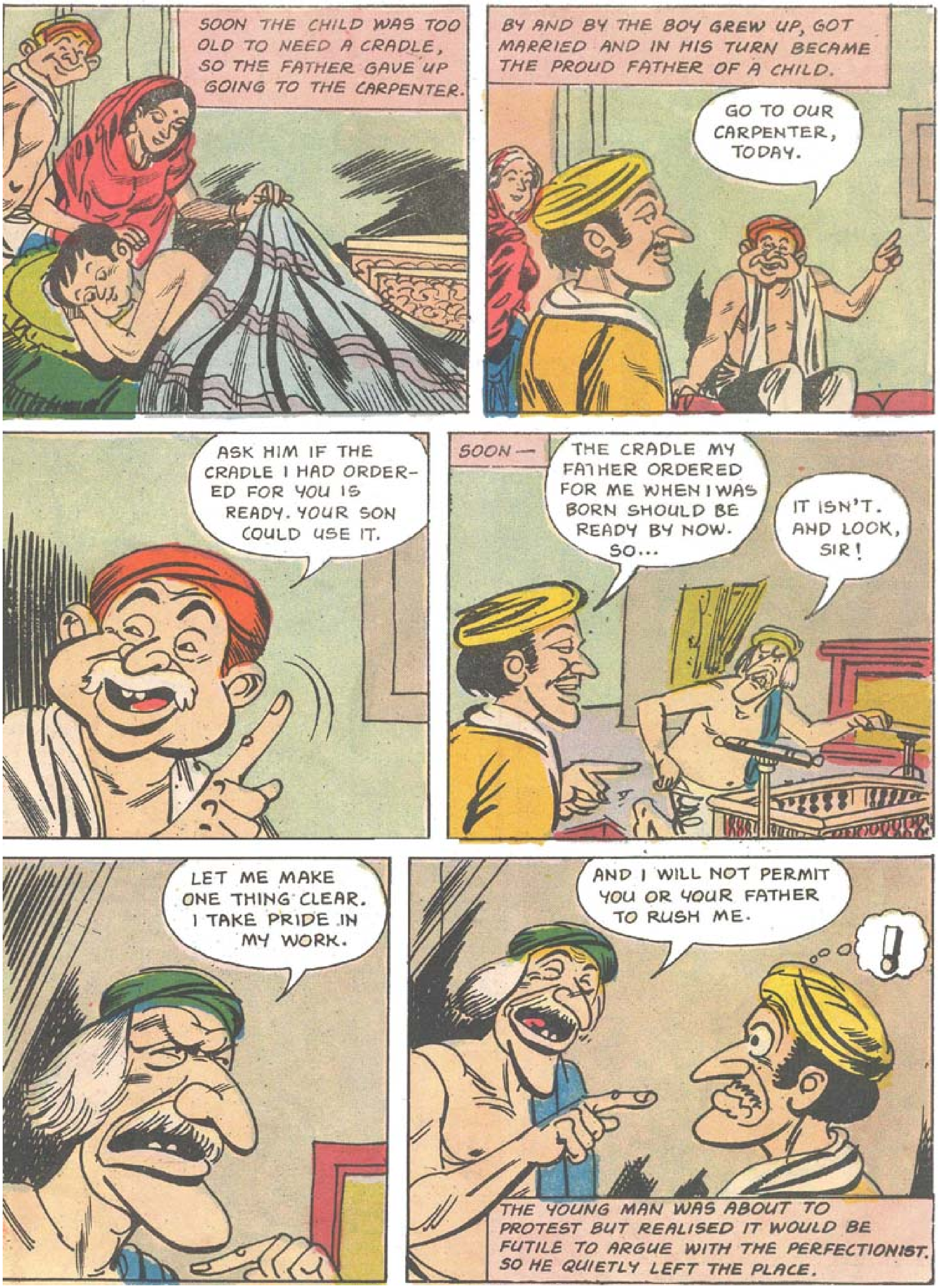
FOR THE NEXT FEW DAYS, HE DID NOTHING BUT OBSERVE THE MELON. THEN —
IT HAS NOT MOVED IN ALL THESE DAYS.
I AM GOING TO TOUCH IT TODAY.
BE CAREFUL, SIR.
IT DOESN'T MOVE EVEN WHEN HE TOUCHES IT.
IT COULDN'T BE A DEMON. THEN WHAT IS IT?
SOON, ONE BY ONE, THE PEASANTS CAME FORWARD AND TOUCHED THE MELON.
IT'S HARMLESS. ABSOLUTELY HARMLESS!
IT'S NOT A DEMON. BUT IF IT'S NOT A DEMON, WHY HAS IT COME HERE?
IT HAS NOT COME HERE.


IT HAS GROWN HERE. LIKE THOSE WHEAT PLANTS.
GROWN? LIKE WHEAT?
BUT WHEAT GROWS FROM SEEDS. WHERE ARE THE SEEDS?
THE MAN PULLED OUT HIS KNIFE AND CUT THE MELON IN HALF.
HERE! THESE ARE THE SEEDS. IF WE PLANT THEM THEY WILL GROW AND PRODUCE FRUIT.
BUT HOW DID THIS FRUIT COME INTO OUR FIELD? WE DIDN'T PLANT ANY SEEDS.
ONE OF THEM MUST HAVE COME WITH THE BAG OF WHEAT YOU S WED.
OH! LET'S PLANT SOME OF THESE SEEDS, SIR.
THEY DRIED A FEW SEEDS AND PLANTED THEM.


THEY PATIENTLY WATCHED THE SEEDS SPROUT AND GROW.
AT LAST, ONE DAY —
LOOK! THEY HAVE BECOME AS LARGE AS OUR DEMON!
YOUR DEMON HAS A NAME. IT IS CALLED A WATER-MELON.
AND IT CAN SAFELY BE EATEN.
HE CUT OFF A SLICE AND BIT INTO IT.
SEE? IT IS DELICIOUS!
LET ME TASTE IT TOO, SIR.
SOON —
HOW CLEVER WE ARE! WE HAVE DISCOVERED SOMETHING NEW TO EAT!
SOMETHING TASTIER THAN ANYTHING WE'VE EATEN SO FAR!
HAD THE FIRST MAN USED THE SECOND MAN'S APPROACH, HE WOULD HAVE BEEN THE ACHIEVER OF THIS MIRACLE.


THE PERFECTIONIST
THERE WAS ONCE A CARPENTER WHO PRIDED HIMSELF ON THE QUALITY OF HIS WORK.
HMM-M. GOOD. BUT NOT GOOD ENOUGH. IT NEEDS IMPROVING. NOW LET ME SEE..
JUST THEN A MAN WALKED IN.
WHAT CAN I DO FOR YOU, SIR?
MY WIFE HAS BEEN BLESSED WITH A CHILD.
I NEED A CRADLE.
YOU HAVE COME TO THE RIGHT MAN. I'LL MAKE YOU THE EST CRADLE YOU HAVE EVER SEEN.
A PERFECT DREAM.
WHEN CAN I COME FOR IT?
IT SHOULD BE READY IN A WEEK FROM NOW.


A WEEK LATER —
I'VE COME FOR THE CRADLE.
EH? THE CRADLE?
OH! THE CRADLE! AH! THE CRADLE!
I WILL BE HONEST WITH YOU, SIR. IT IS NOT YET READY.
AFTER ALL, IT HAS GOT TO BE THE BEST YOU WILL AGREE.
SHALL I COME TOMORROW?
GIVE ME A WEEK, SIR. THE CRADLE HAS TO BE A DREAM, DON'T FORGET, SIR.
WEEK AFTER WEEK, THE FATHER CAME, BUT —
NO, IT IS NOT YET READY, SIR. I AM NOT SATISFIED WITH MY WORK. WHATEVER I DO MUST BE PERFECT.


SOON THE CHILD WAS TOO OLD TO NEED A CRADLE, SO THE FATHER GAVE UP GOING TO THE CARPENTER.
BY AND BY THE BOY GREW UP, GOT MARRIED AND IN HIS TURN BECAME THE PROUD FATHER OF A CHILD.
GO TO OUR CARPENTER, TODAY.
ASK HIM IF THE CRADLE I HAD ORDERED FOR YOU IS READY. YOUR SON COULD USE IT.
SOON—
THE CRADLE MY FATHER ORDERED FOR ME WHEN I WAS BORN SHOULD BE READY BY NOW. SO...
IT ISN'T. AND LOOK, SIR!
LET ME MAKE ONE THING CLEAR. I TAKE PRIDE IN MY WORK.
AND I WILL NOT PERMIT YOU OR YOUR FATHER TO RUSH ME.
!
THE YOUNG MAN WAS ABOUT TO PROTEST BUT REALISED IT WOULD BE FUTILE TO ARGUE WITH THE PERFECTIONIST. SO HE QUIETLY LEFT THE PLACE.


THE THIEF, THE OLD WOMAN AND THE PRIEST
A THIEF ONCE CAME TO THE HOUSE OF AN OLD WOMAN TO SEE WHAT HE COULD STEAL.
SHE'S STILL AWAKE. SHE'S MOANING!
O.O.O.O.O! AAAAA! WILL I NEVER BE RID OF IT?
OH, THIS DIB-DIB IS WORSE THAN THE PLAGUE.
SHE'S SUFFERING FROM SOME DISEASE WHICH IS WORSE THAN THE PLAGUE.
IT WILL BE THE DEATH OF ME! OH! THIS DIB-DIB!
OH, GOD! AND I'VE BEEN BREATHING THE AIR OUTSIDE HER ROOM!
I'M SHIVERING! I'M FEELING FEVERISH! HAVE I CAUGHT IT TOO?



CONTD. ON PAGE 19

SUFI SAINTS OF INDIA

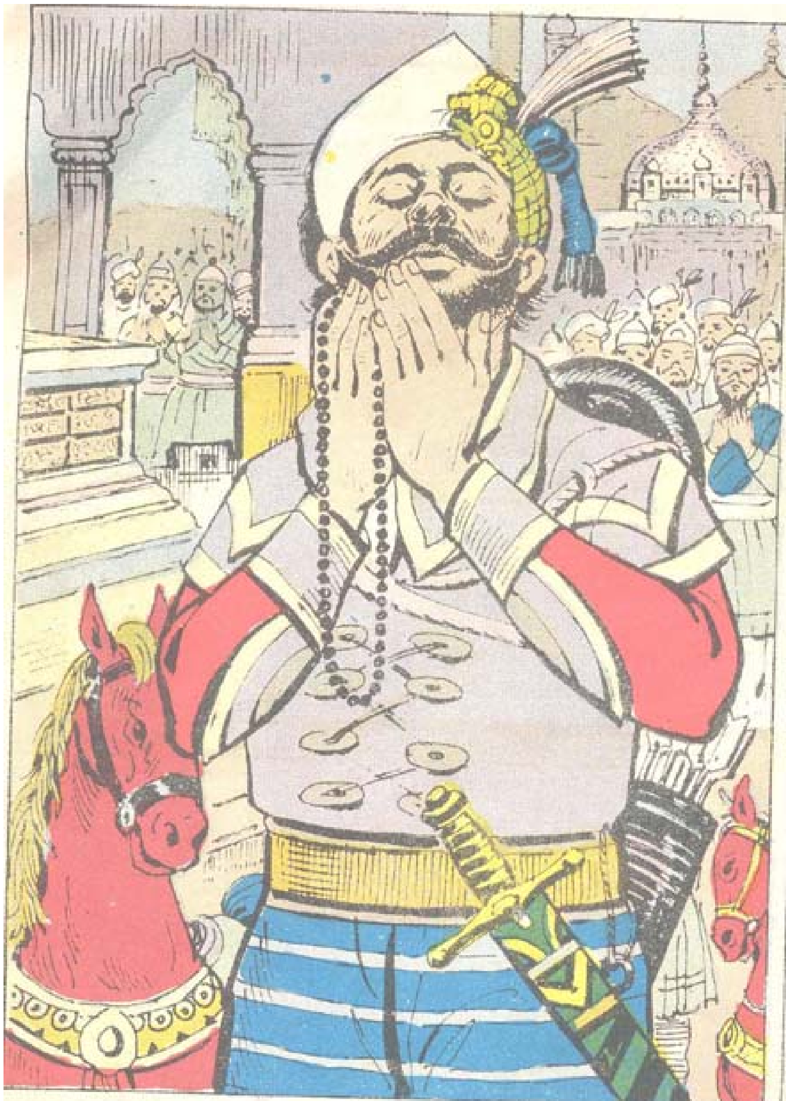
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THE SUFIS WERE SAINTS OR MYSTICS OF PERSIA WHO FORMED THEMSELVES INTO SEVERAL ORDERS AND SPREAD OUT TO DISTANT LANDS. SOME OF THEM LIVED AS HOUSEHOLDERS.



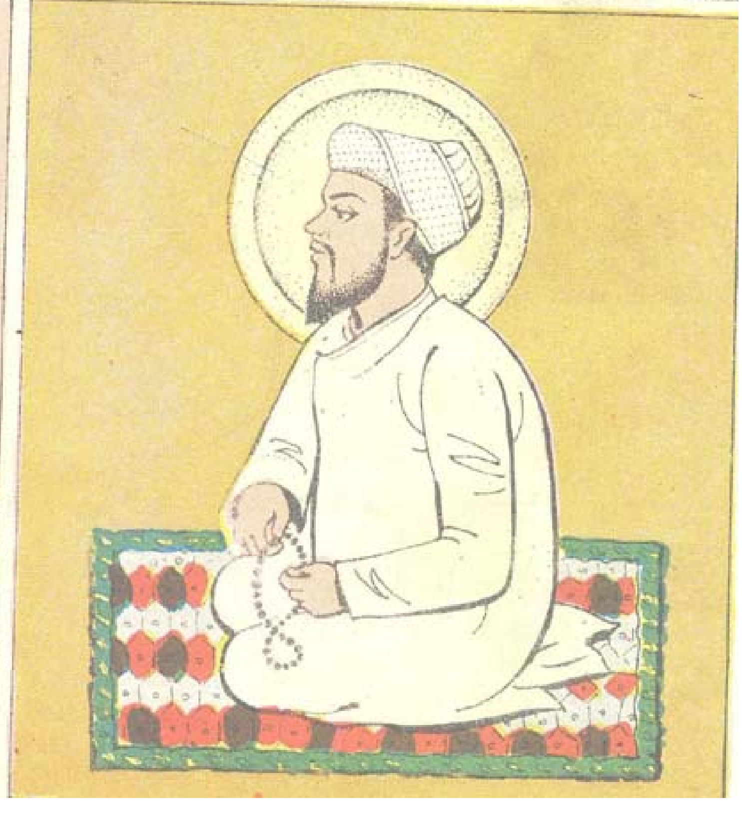


KHWAJA MUINUDDIN OF THE CHISHTI ORDER CAME TO INDIA IN THE 12TH CENTURY AND SETTLED DOWN AT AJMER. HIS PIETY AND HUMILITY ENDEARED HIM TO HINDUS AND MUSLIMS ALIKE. THEY AFFECTIONATELY CALLED HIM GARIB NAWAZ, (ONE WHO CHERISHES THE HUMBLE). HIS TOMB HAS BECOME A PLACE OF PILGRIMAGE FOR HIS FOLLOWING ALL OVER THE WORLD.

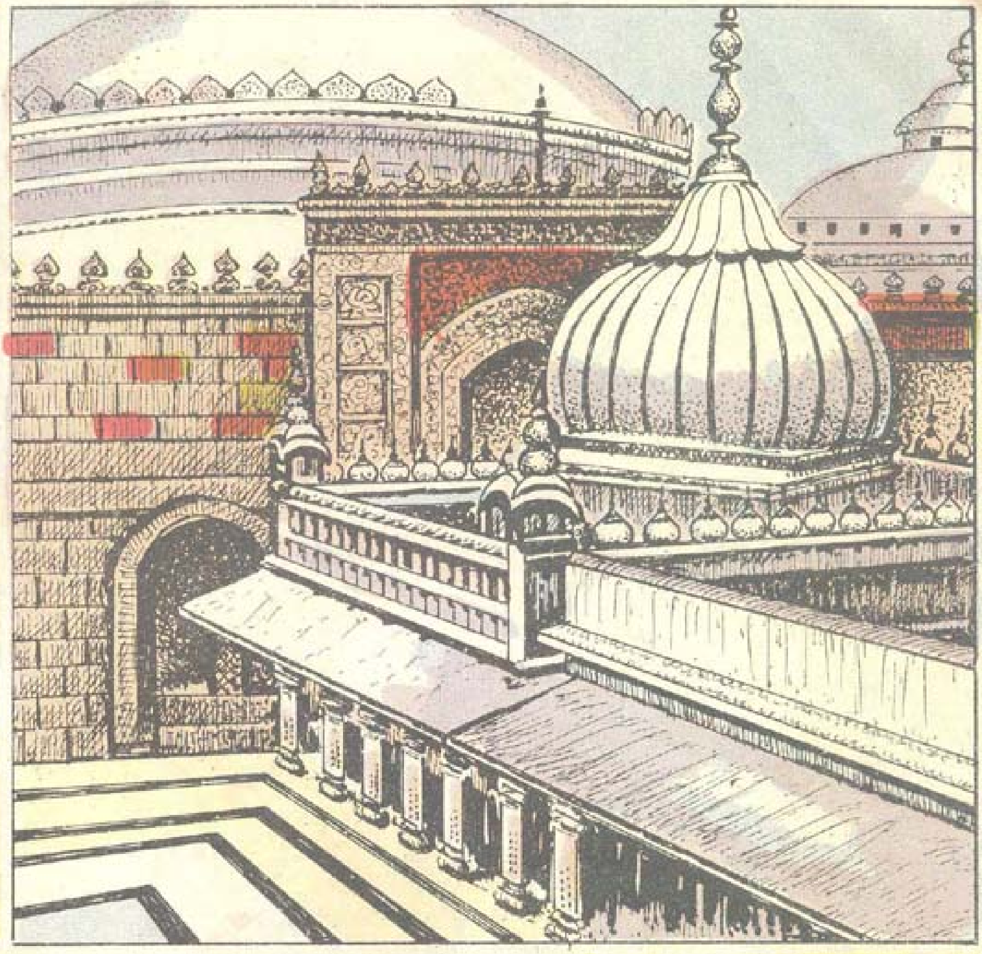


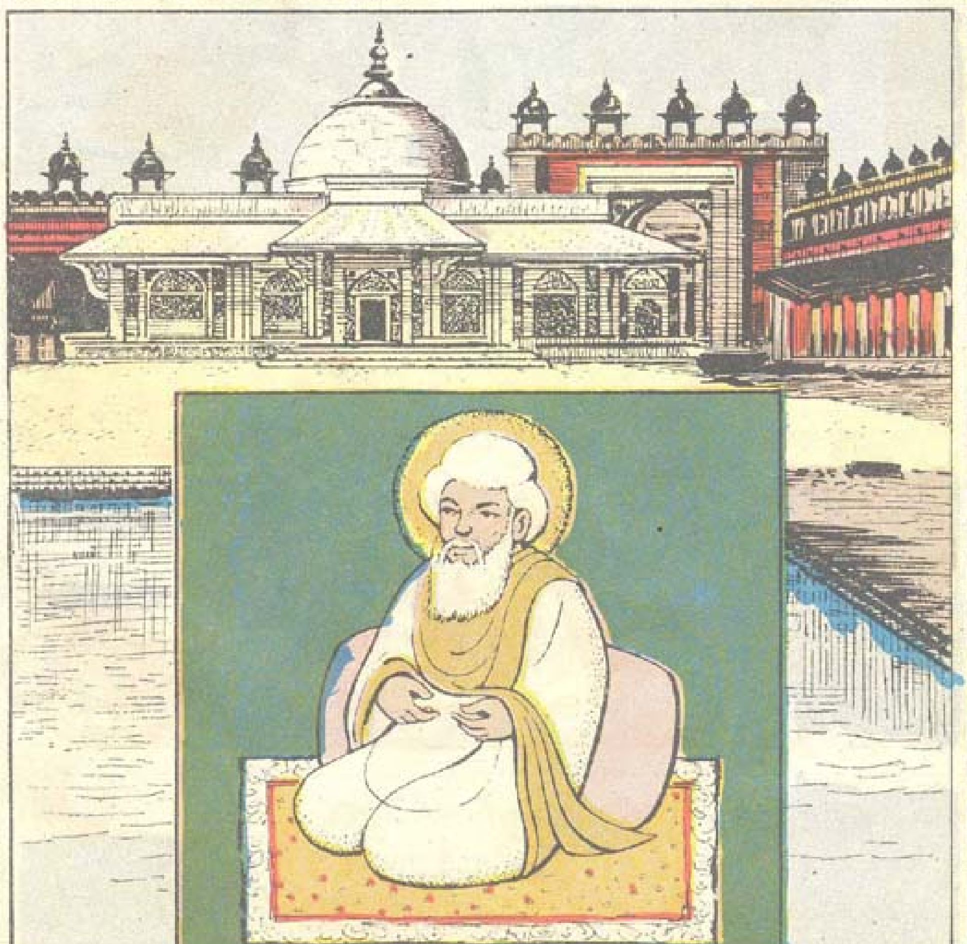
AFTER HIS SACK OF DELHI IN 1398, TIMUR WAS RETURNING HOME TO SAMARKAND, LADEN WITH GOLD AND RICHES. SUDDENLY AT A PLACE IN PUNJAB, THE CARAVAN STOPPED.
THE HORSES REFUSED TO MOVE. TIMUR BECAME FURIOUS. WHEN TOLD THAT THE PLACE WAS SANCTIFIED, TIMUR ROARED,
"BY WHOM?"
A VOICE ANSWERED:
"BABA FARID, THE KING OF KINGS."
TIMUR, THE STORY GOES, BOWED TO THE MEMORY OF THE SAINT AND SPENT THE NIGHT AT THE DURGAH (TOMB) OF BABA FARID.

BABA FARID THE MYSTIC WAS POPULARLY KNOWN AS GANJ-SHAKAR (TREASURER OF SWEETNESS). IT IS SAID THAT AS A CHILD HE WOULD GET SOME SUGAR FROM HIS MOTHER AFTER EVERY PRAYER. ONE DAY SHE FORGOT TO PUT IT UNDER THE PRAYER MAT. BUT BY SOME DIVINE POWER, SUGAR DID APPEAR WHEN FARID TURNED TO TAKE HIS REWARD! HIS HYMNS ARE INCLUDED IN THE GRANTH SAHIB, THE HOLY BOOK OF THE SIKHS. "DO NOT GIVE ME SCISSORS," HE WOULD SAY. "GIVE ME A NEEDLE. I SEW, I DO NOT CUT."



ANOTHER GREAT SUFI WAS NIZAMUDDIN AULIYA WHO SETTLED IN DELHI AND SPENT HIS LIFE IN THE SERVICE OF GOD AND HIS CREATURES. AROUND HIS TOMB HAS GROWN A SETTLEMENT POPULARLY REFERRED TO AS "SUFI BASTI".





SHEIKH SALIM CHISHTI, A SUFI SAINT OF EMPEROR AKBAR'S TIME, HAD SETTLED DOWN AT SIKRI NEAR AGRA. IT WAS WITH HIS BLESSINGS THAT A SON WAS AT LAST BORN TO AKBAR. THE CHILD, NAMED SALIM AFTER THE SAINT, LATER BECAME EMPEROR JAHANGIR. AKBAR BUILT A MARBLE TOMB FOR THE SAINT AT FATEHPUR SIKRI.


THE MAGIC LAMP
YOUR ORDER, MY MASTER ?
BRING ME THE LATEST AMAR CHITRA KATHA.
HERE YOU ARE, MASTER.
OH! THANK YOU!
OH! I FORGOT. YOU MAY GO.
MAY I BORROW YOUR COPY OF A AMAR... CHIT.. CHIT... CHITRA KATHA FOR A WHILE ?
!
THE SONS OF RAMA
WHO DOES NOT LOVE TO READ AMAR CHITRA KATHA?


OH, GOD! HAS HE BEEN ATTACKED BY SOME WILD ANIMAL CALLED DIB-DIB?
CLAWS! CLAW MARKS! I MUST LOOK FOR CLAW MARKS!
SHE EXAMINED THE THIEF'S BACK.
NOT EVEN A SMALL SCRATCH! NOW WHAT COULD DIB... DIB...
I KNOW. IT MUST BE SOME SPIRIT, OUT TO PUNISH THIEVES!
OH, GOD! I'LL NEED THE HELP OF THE LOCAL PRIEST TO SAVE MY HUSBAND!


SHE RAN ALL THE WAY TO THE HOUSE OF THE LOCAL PRIEST.
WHEN THAT SAVANT SAW HER APPROACHING HIS HOUSE—
I WONDER WHAT THE WIFE OF THAT THIEF COULD WANT AT THIS TIME OF THE NIGHT!
HE SOON KNEW.
O HOLY SIR! MY HUSBAND IS POSSESSED BY A SPIRIT. PLEASE COME AND SEE HIM.
THIS IS WHAT I'M HERE FOR, AREN'T I? WHATEVER THE HOUR I MUST GO.
DON'T ASK ME TO WAIT TILL MORNING, SIR.
IT MIGHT BE TOO LATE.
DID I SAY I WOULDN'T COME? LEAD ME TO YOUR HOUSE!
AND SO—
AH, MY HUSBAND! YOU WILL SOON BE RID OF DIB-DIB.


WHEN THE THIEF SAW THE PRIEST—
THE PRIEST! IT'S WORSE THAN I SUSPECTED... MY END HAS COME...
HOLY SIR! SAVE MY LIFE! PLEASE SAVE MY LIFE!
I'VE CAUGHT THE DREADED DISEASE, DIB-DIB, FROM THE OLD WOMAN DOWN THE ROAD.
?
SHE SPOKE OF A SPIRIT. HE SPEAKS OF A DISEASE. WHAT AM I TO MAKE OF IT?
WHY ARE YOU SILENT? WON'T YOU SAY SOMETHING, SIR?
I'LL SAY A FEW WORDS TO HIM, AND THEN LOOK INTO THE MATTER.
SON, REPENT AND BEG FOR MERCY. THE HOURS LEFT ON EARTH FOR YOU MAY BE VERY FEW.
NO! NO!
THE PRIEST THEN LEFT THE THIEF'S HOUSE...


...AND CAME TO THAT OF THE OLD WOMAN.
OH DIB-DIB, YOU'LL BE THE DEATH OF ME.
WHAT'S THAT?
YOU'RE KILLING ME, DIB-DIB. YOU MERCILESS DIB-DIB...
SUDDENLY THE PRIEST BEGAN TO SHIVER.
DISEASE OR SPIRIT... IT'S GOT ME TOO... MY BODY AND MY SOUL...
AND AS HE SHIVERED, THE WINDOW FRAME RATTLED.
NOW WHAT'S THAT?
HANDS! A THIEF!


GOT YOU!
SHE WAS SHOCKED TO SEE WHO IT WAS.
YOU! FOR SHAME!
WHAT ARE YOU DOING OUTSIDE MY WINDOW AT THIS TIME OF THE NIGHT?
Y-YOUR DIB-DIB HAS ME, TOO, IN ITS GRIP... BOTH MY BODY AND MY SOUL ... MY DAYS ARE N-NUMBERED...
OH, YOU FOOL! YOU HEAR ME WAIL ABOUT DIB-DIB AND YOU IMAGINE ALL SORTS OF THINGS. PAH!
AND TO THINK I REVERED YOU ALL THESE YEARS! PAH! IF YOU WANT TO KNOW WHAT DIB-DIB REALLY IS, STOP THAT SHIVERING AND LOOK IN HERE.

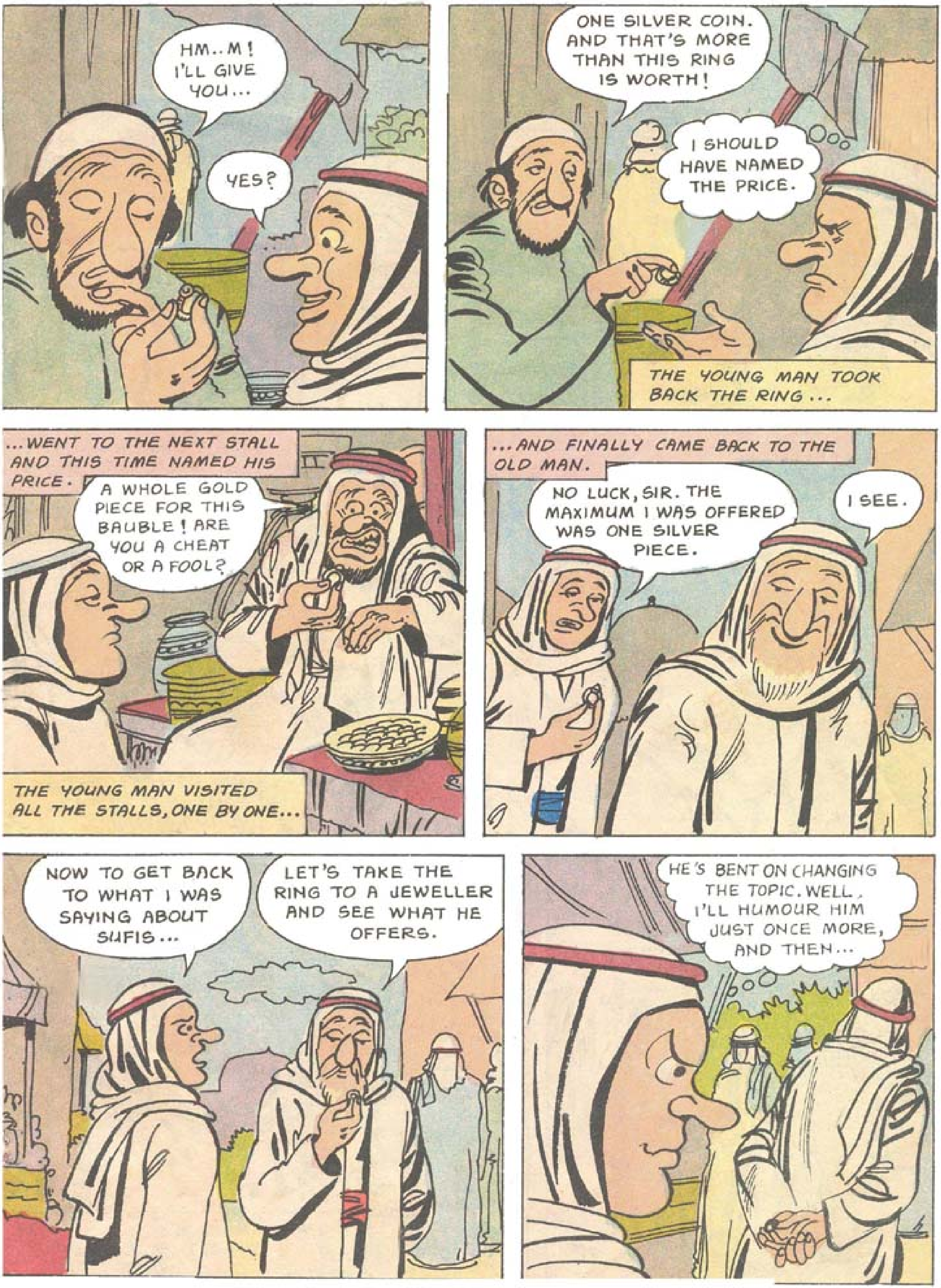

THERE'S YOUR DREADED DIB-DIB!
THANK GOD, IT WAS ONLY THAT AND NOTHING WORSE!
I'LL BE DISCREET ABOUT YOUR FOLLY, SO DON'T WORRY.
I MUST BE GOING NOW. I HAVE WORK TO DO.
A MOMENT, SIR. ONE GOOD TURN DESERVES ANOTHER, YOU'LL AGREE. SO...
...IF EVER I NEED YOUR HELP...
TO BE SURE! TO BE SURE!
AND THE PRIEST HURRIED TOWARDS THE THIEF'S HOUSE.


AS HE ENTERED IT—
GO AWAY! YOU LEFT ME TO DIE ALONE, DIDN'T YOU?
NOW, NOW! DO YOU THINK A MAN AS PIOUS AND LEARNED AS I WOULD DO THAT?
I WENT TO FIND OUT HOW I COULD BRING ABOUT YOUR RECOVERY.
!
DID YOU SAY RECOVERY?


THE PRIEST MUMBLED SOME WORDS OVER THE WATER IN HIS HAND.
NOW PROMISE ME YOU WILL NEVER AGAIN STEAL.
I PROMISE!
AWAY, DIB-DIB! I SAID AWAY!
DON'T DARE RETURN AND TORMENT THIS MAN AGAIN!
I'M CURED! I'M CURED!
AFTER THAT, THE THIEF, OF COURSE, KEPT HIS PROMISE. THE PRIEST CONTINUED TO BE RESPECTED AS THE HOLY MAN OF THE PLACE. AS FOR THE OLD WOMAN, SHE COULD NOT FOR THE LIFE OF HER FIND AN OPPORTUNITY TO MAKE USE OF THE PRIEST.

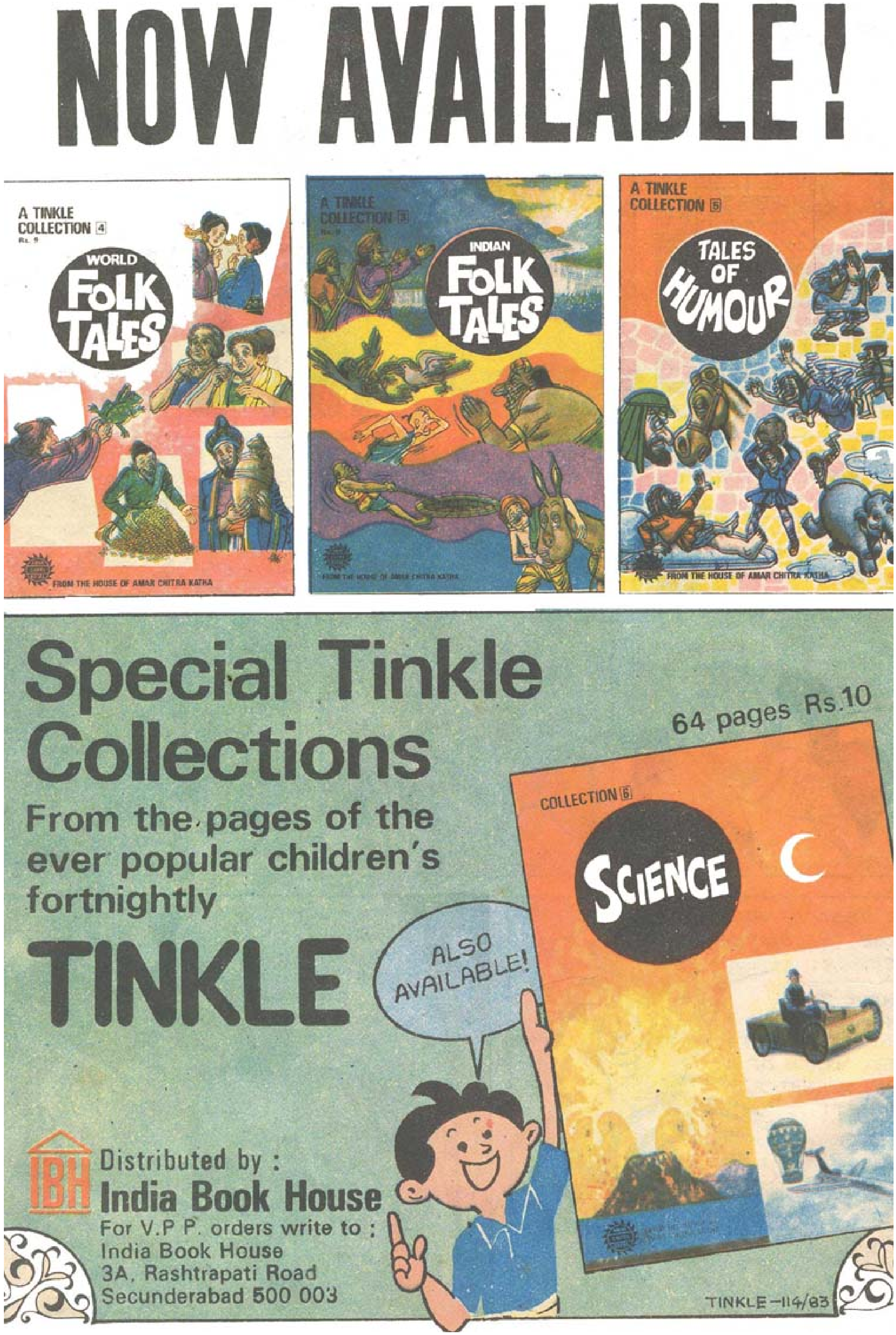

THE IMMATURE CRITIC
A VENERABLE OLD MAN WAS WALKING DOWN A STREET, LOST IN HIS OWN THOUGHTS...
... WHEN A YOUNG MAN CAME BY.
SIR! WHAT DO YOU THINK OF THE SUFI MASTERS, SIR?
UH?
THE SUFI MASTERS, SIR. I HAVE NO RESPECT FOR THEM. I THINK THEY ACT MYSTERIOUS AND SPEAK IN RIDDLES BECAUSE...
... BECAUSE THEY WANT TO CONFUSE US. BUT THEY WILL NEVER SUCCEED.
I PERSONALLY HAVE NO FAITH WHATSOEVER IN THEIR WISDOM. THEIR IDEAS ARE ALL WRONG.


WHAT ABOUT YOU, SIR?
WILL YOU SELL THIS RING FOR ME?
THAT'S NO ANSWER TO MY QUESTION! HE'S USING THE TRICKS OF THE SUFIS.
ONE OF THOSE MEN MIGHT BUY IT. TRY TO GET AT LEAST ONE PIECE OF GOLD FOR IT.
I KNOW YOUR TRICKS, OLD MAN. ANYWAY, I'LL HUMOUR YOU FOR THE MOMENT.
THE YOUNG MAN WENT TO ONE OF THE STALLS.
WHAT WILL YOU OFFER ME FOR THIS RING?
LET ME HAVE A LOOK AT IT.
IT'S BEAUTIFUL, FATHER! PLEASE BUY IT FOR ME!


HM..M! I'LL GIVE YOU...
YES?
ONE SILVER COIN. AND THAT'S MORE THAN THIS RING IS WORTH!
I SHOULD HAVE NAMED THE PRICE.
THE YOUNG MAN TOOK BACK THE RING...
...WENT TO THE NEXT STALL AND THIS TIME NAMED HIS PRICE.
A WHOLE GOLD PIECE FOR THIS BAUBLE! ARE YOU A CHEAT OR A FOOL?
THE YOUNG MAN VISITED ALL THE STALLS, ONE BY ONE...
...AND FINALLY CAME BACK TO THE OLD MAN.
NO LUCK, SIR. THE MAXIMUM I WAS OFFERED WAS ONE SILVER PIECE.
I SEE.
NOW TO GET BACK TO WHAT I WAS SAYING ABOUT SUFIS...
LET'S TAKE THE RING TO A JEWELLER AND SEE WHAT HE OFFERS.
HE'S BENT ON CHANGING THE TOPIC. WELL, I'LL HUMOUR HIM JUST ONCE MORE, AND THEN...


SOON —
SIR, I WOULD LIKE TO SELL THIS GEM. COULD YOU VALUE IT FOR ME?
IT'S WORTH A THOUSAND PIECES OF GOLD.
WHAT!
I WOULD LIKE TO BUY IT MYSELF.
THANK YOU, SIR. I'LL CONSIDER YOUR OFFER.
AND HE LEFT THE SHOP, FOLLOWED BY THE YOUNG MAN.
LATER —
WHAT YOU KNOW OF SUFIS IS ABOUT AS MUCH AS THOSE TRINKET-SELLERS KNOW OF PRECIOUS STONES.
IF YOU WISH TO VALUE GEMS, MY SON, FIRST BECOME A JEWELLER.
THE VENERABLE OLD MAN WAS NONE OTHER THAN THE SUFI SAGE — DHUN-NUN.


SWEET OR SOUR
THE OWNER OF AN ORCHARD APPOINTED A MAN TO TEND HIS POMEGRANATE TREES.
A FEW MONTHS LATER, AS HE WAS WALKING THROUGH HIS ORCHARD —
I'M THIRSTY. GIVE ME ONE OF THOSE POMEGRANATES.
THE MAN PLUCKED A FRUIT AND GAVE IT TO HIM.
HERE YOU ARE, SIR.
WHEN THE OWNER BEGAN TO EAT IT —
UGH! IT'S SOUR. GIVE ME ANOTHER.
BUT THE NEXT ONE WAS EVEN MORE SOUR.
AFTER TASTING AND REJECTING SEVERAL, THE OWNER LOST HIS TEMPER.
YOU HAVE BEEN WORKING HERE FOR MONTHS NOW. CAN'T YOU TELL WHICH OF THE POMEGRANATES IS SWEET!
I AM SORRY, SIR. I WAS APPOINTED TO TEND THE TREES, SIR... NOT TASTE THE FRUIT!
!



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